



Virtus Tennis Publicity & Information Leaflet



BACKGROUND

Virtus is the International Federation for athletes with intellectual impairments. It is a global organisation that promotes inclusion through sport and is a full member of the International Paralympic Committee representing intellectual impairment.

Virtus (formerly known as INAS) was formed in 1986 and has grown to a membership of more than 80 nations across the world, representing more than 250,000 athletes.

Virtus is inspired by the belief that an intellectual impairment should not be a barrier to enjoying and being the best in sport. Virtus' vision is that athletes with an intellectual impairment across the world have the opportunity to achieve excellence in sport in high-level competition.

Virtus works through its member organisations and partners to change attitudes, create opportunities and develop pathways in sport to ensure that athletes with an intellectual impairment can compete at the highest possible level.

VIRTUS TENNIS PROGRAMME

The Virtus Tennis programme offers the most talented tennis players across the world a clear pathway and the opportunity for continual development of skills.

There are currently ten nations who regularly compete in Virtus championship events providing their most talented players the opportunity to play at the highest level. Virtus are currently working with other nations so that more players can participate at this level of competition.

For more information on the programme visit www.inas.org/sports/sports/tennis

TENNIS COMPETITION PATHWAY

Tennis is a sport that is growing rapidly within the Virtus programme with a number of sanctioned events complementing the annual World Championships and Virtus Global Games - a multi-sport event held every four years.

Over recent years Virtus championships have been held in Czech Republic, France, Ecuador, Italy, USA, Great Britain and Australia. Virtus events are endorsed by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Virtus Tennis Championship events all include the following events:

- Men's and Women's Singles
- Men's Doubles and Women's Doubles
- Mixed Doubles
- Men's Team Competition (2 players from the same nation)
- Women's Team Competition (2 players from the same nation)

Following each World Championships the new World Rankings for tennis are published on the Virtus website.

Competition Format

The rules of Virtus Tennis pertaining to competition, rankings and records are based on those of ITF with approved variations by Virtus, available on the Virtus website. Subject to the number of athletes, each event will be run as a round-robin, feeding in to a main draw and consolation draw.

For the Round Robin and Consolation Draw - each match will be of one, 6-game set, with a 7 point tie-break (first to 7, winning by 2 clear points) played at 6-games all.

For the Main Draw matches – matches will be played using 3 short sets. The first two sets to 4 games, with a 7 point tie-break (first to 7, winning by 2 clear points) played at 4-games all. If the score reaches one set all, then a 10 point match tie-break will be played as the 3rd set (first to 10 points, winning by 2 clear points).

The medal matches (final & 3rd/4th play-off) will be the best of 3 sets. The first two sets to 6 games, with a 7 point tie-break (first to 7, winning by 2 clear points) played at 6 games all. If the score reaches one set all then a 10 point match tie-break will be played as the 3rd set (first to 10 points, winning by 2 clear points).

Matches will have a solo chair umpire, who will call the score, all lines, service lets, foot faults, time violations and code violations under the ITF three step Point Penalty System (PPS).

VIRTUS TENNIS COMMITTEE

The Tennis Committee was formed in early 2015 with the aim of working with existing and new member organisations to promote the opportunities within the Virtus Tennis programme. The Committee are continually engaging with countries so that the programme can develop further.

If you are interested in offering Virtus tennis opportunities to your most talented players, then we would be pleased to hear from you.

With Committee members split between the five Virtus regions, we can support nations to link with other organisations within your country and advice on player tennis programmes that will maximise your athletes' potential and development.

For more information contact:

Lesley Whitehead – Virtus Tennis Director at lesley.whitehead@virtus.sport



ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility ensures the presence of an impairment.

There are currently three eligibility groups recognised within Virtus competition:

1. II1 is for athletes with an intellectual disability. Virtus adopts the World Health Organisation (WHO) and American Association for Intellectual and Development Disability (AAIDD) definition of intellectual disability which is:
 - a. An IQ of 75 or below
 - b. Significant limitations in adaptive behaviour
 - c. Impairment must have been present before the age of 18
2. II2 is for athletes with a multiple or severe intellectual impairment.
3. II3 is for athletes with high functioning autism and is offered on a demonstration basis only during the trial phase.

Athletes applying for eligibility must present evidence from a psychologist after undergoing psychological assessment. This is sent to Virtus and will be considered by the Virtus Eligibility Committee. Athletes who meet the criteria will appear on the Virtus Masters List and are eligible to compete internationally.

Eligibility is managed by Virtus member organisations who will help athletes complete the application form and gather the necessary evidence needed to support the application. When complete, it will submit the application to Virtus.

Virtus manages the eligibility process, and application forms and guidance notes can be found on the Virtus website. Eligibility is mandatory for all Virtus international competitions, IPC competitions and many International Federation sanctioned events.



A MESSAGE FROM ONE OF OUR ATHLETES

Peter Millar is 23 years old and is one of Virtus's top players. This is his story!

I first started playing tennis at the age of 4 when a close family friend saw me hitting a ball and saw that I had potential. Here I am nearly 20 years later still playing tennis and now I am part of an amazing organisation called Virtus in which I have been representing Great Britain since 2011.

Playing tennis for GB in Virtus competitions has given me a sense of purpose and belief in myself that despite having a learning disability I can still achieve in sport.

Sport, especially tennis, is my passion, it's what I love to do. I have been lucky enough to have represented GB in lots of different countries, win medals and meet lots of amazing people. Putting on a GB kit and representing my country in the sport that I love gives me a huge sense of pride and honour. It's better than winning the lottery!

Being with the GB team playing some of the best learning disability tennis players in the world, trying my very best in every match and meeting new people is the best ever experience that I've ever had.

I would never have thought at the age of 4 that I would be the person I am today. I know that every hour of training, every challenge I've had to face, has been worth it!

